

Recreational Uses

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Like other agencies, the Commission of Outdoor Recreation can benefit from the application of space-age technology in its field of operation. The Commission's responsibility is to gather pertinent information on the recreation supply and needs of the Commonwealth and from these data prepare and update a statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan: the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

The Virginia Outdoors Plan outlines, in detail, recreation plans for the entire State. The plan calls for certain areas to be set aside as state parks, local and regional parks, scenic highways, byways and parkways, natural areas, scenic rivers, and public game and fish management areas. The Commission's interest in the Chesapeake Bay area also includes the development of private outdoor recreation projects and any problems which relate to protection of the outdoors and the natural environment. An example is the Commission's involvement in the primary environmental effects of dredging and landfill upon estuarine areas. To this end, the Commission reviews and offers comments on dredging applications and related projects as they are proposed.

An initial problem in comprehensive outdoor recreation planning is the availability of data. Suggestions for possible development must be followed up by detailed investigation. Information must be gathered relating to topography, ground water conditions, biotic life, access to surface water, and surrounding land use. Much of this needed information is quickly discernible from high-altitude infrared color photography as well as from conventional black-and-white air photography. As we gather experience we foresee the desirability of thermal infrared photography to detect trends in environmental evolution.

The greatest advantage we anticipate at this time is increased speed of interpretation from existing coverage. Without presently obtainable overflight viewing we must require advance scheduling of field trips, running into several months' time. Often this means the difference between acquisition or loss of a critical land parcel.

At the present time we could utilize high altitude imagery for study of the recreational potential of such areas as Fisherman's Island, the Barrier Islands, and potential bayside state park locations on the Eastern Shore. We can also obtain preliminary material from 1969 and 1970 imagery without waiting for the completion, later this year, of the Recreation and Tourism Study of the Eastern Shore.¹

At present, we are looking forward to the results of a study of experimental applications of remote sensing techniques to outdoor recreation planning.² This experimental study will provide a good opportunity to test application of remote sensing technology in the collection of data for outdoor recreation planning. We feel that after the study has been completed, we will have a better understanding of the most appropriate ways to incorporate remote sensing data into the recreation planning process. We can then suggest lines of further action and analysis.

¹The study is being conducted by the Virginia Division of State Planning and Community Affairs with financial assistance from the Economic Development Administration of the United States Department of Commerce.

²This study is being conducted by the Department of Environmental Sciences of the University of Virginia under the direction of Wallace E. Reed and H. Grant Goodell. The experimental proposal was submitted to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.